

A STUDY ON PURCHASE INTENTION OF A THAI AUTOMOBILE REPAIR CENTER

Vilawan Piriyaup¹ and Seongdok Kim²

Abstract: *With the continued growth of automobile sales in Thailand, the automobile repair industry has been intensified. The aim of this research is to study the factors that have impact on customer purchase intention of P automobile repair center in order to maintain more customers and generating better revenues. The variables included in the proposed framework were purchase intention (dependent variable) and brand awareness, convenience, perceived quality, and word of mouth (independent variable). In this current research, a quantitative approach using survey questionnaire was adopted. 180 respondents' data were collected by convenience sampling method. The multiple linear regression was applied to examine statistical influence of independent variables on dependent variable. The findings indicated that brand awareness and perceived quality had impact on customers' purchase intention while convenience and word of mouth had no impact. Moreover, a few practical recommendations were discussed for the management team to consider for purchase intention improvement.*

Keywords: *purchase intention, brand awareness, convenience, perceived quality, word of mouth*

Introduction

The increased automobile sales cause automobile service industry to be more important (Berndt, 2009). According to the development of technology, there is a change from manual to automatic vehicles which lead to growing in demand for automobile repair center (Izogo & Ogba, 2015). The automotive services industry includes car servicing, mechanical repairs, car body repairs and breakdown and recovery services (Brito & Aguilar, 2007).

Asia has becoming the leader in world economy due to the rapid high growth. From year 1990 to 2015, the region growth rate is about 6% per year. The automobile industry in

Asia is expanding parallelly with the growth of economy. This situation has brought increased rate of car consumption and led to expansion of automobile repair industry.

In Thailand, the automobile market has grown on average of 6% during the decade. Accordingly, the number of establishments has increased year by year. Many firms try to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Consequently, to be a leader in the market, 'P' company needs to adapt and understand customers' intention in choosing its automobile repair center.

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Literature Review

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

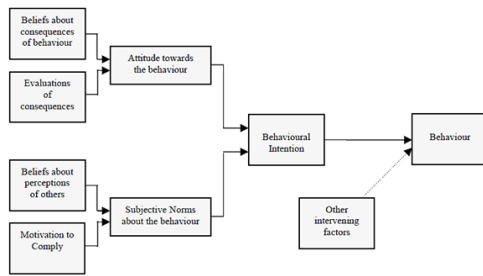


Figure 1: The Theory of Reasoned Action
Source: Fishbein & Ajzen (1975)

The consistency of intention could forecast consumer behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975). Theory of reasoned action mainly links between concepts and hypotheses postulated, and introduced by social psychologists in order to understand and forecast human behavior (Rehman, McKemey, Garforth, Huggins, Yates, Cook, & Dorward, 2003). The theory of reasoned action model is able to forecast the behavioral intention depending on a person's attitude and subjective norms (Southey, 2011). Attitude is defined as the entire set of presented behavioral beliefs connecting with behavior to different outcomes and other aspects (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Shook and Bratianu (2010) mention that one of attitude forms are consumers' beliefs about consequences of the behavior; the more preferable probability is, the stronger of intention to act the behavior. Due to consumer's positive perception in brand awareness and perceived quality, these could build consumers' favorable possibility. Then consumer would decide to perform the behavior purchase intention as a result.

The social pressure for a person is to perceive other people's attitude toward his or her behavior. From consumer's perception, the behavioral outcome is determined by people around him or her and their point of view. Subject norm is the influence from other people in a person behavior (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg, 2006). In this

current research, word-of-mouth is more relevant to subjective norms.

Theory of Buyer Behavior

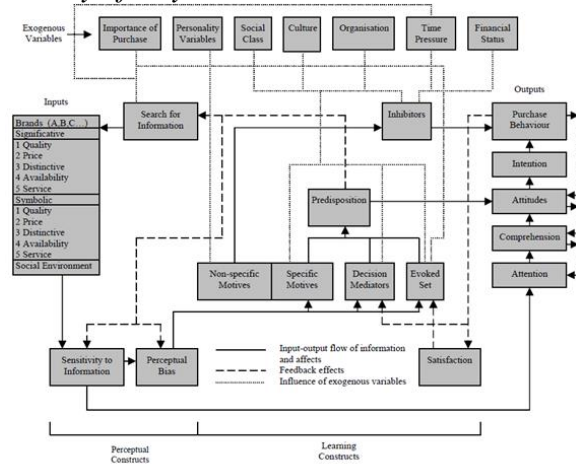


Figure 2: The Theory of Buyer Behavior

Source: Howard & Sheth (1969)

Theory of Buyer Behavior (or Howard and Sheth Model) was introduced by Howard and Sheth (1969). It is "a sophisticated integration of the various social, psychological and marketing influences on consumer choice into a coherent sequence of information processing" (Foxall, 1990, p.10). According to Figure 2, input variables control and communicate consumer by environmental stimuli from various sources (Bray, 2008). Significant stimuli are the factor of products and brands that consumer faces (Foxall, 1990). The significant stimuli are quality, price, distinctive, availability, and service. In this research, the convenience variable is developed as it relates to availability.

- Brand Awareness

According to Aaker (1996), brand awareness is consumer's ability in identifying and memorizing the brand in various conditions. Brand awareness is to understand the link of brand and certain product that consumer desire to acquire.

Consumers mainly make a decision based on brand awareness which supports the customer-based brand equity management

(Chung, Lee & Heath, 2013). When making a purchase of product or service, consumers must concern of brand otherwise they could not perform the action. Also, brand awareness has huge impact on consumers' purchase intention as consumer tends to purchase a product or service which the brands are well-known in the market (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000).

Chi, Yeh, & Yang (2009) has conducted the research of cellular phone manufacturers in Taiwan. The study shows that brand awareness impacts purchase intention indicating that the higher the brand awareness, the higher the purchase intention. Also, Sharifi (2014) has studied the influence of the trilogy of emotion in Iran; the result of the study is there is an influence of brand awareness on future purchase intention. Moreover, a study on Pakistan Tobacco Company of (Shah, Aziz, Jaffari, Waris, Ejaz, Fatima, & Sherazi, 2012) demonstrated that brand awareness and brand preference have significant effects on purchase intention. Furthermore, for Austria automobile manufacture industry, Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt & Fuller (2013) noted that brand awareness has a positive effect on purchase intentions. Porral and Mangin (2016) study found that purchase intention has significant relationships between private label image and perceived quality.

- Convenience

The dimensions of convenience are time and effort which consumer used in acquiring products and services, pointed as a factor of products or service that decrease its non-monetary price (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). Convenience definition can separate into two factors which are facility convenience and service convenience (Kim & Jin, 2001). Hansen and Deutscher (1978) defined convenience by the closeness to home or work place, closeness to others store, car parks, travel period, and ease of drive which

include access convenience (car park, working hours) and transaction convenience (payment method). Due to change of socioeconomic, development of technology and intensity of competition, the demand of convenience is increased in both online and offline market (Seiders, Voss, Godfrey & Grewal, 2007). Convenience could build consumer's preference in goods and services (Yale & Venkatesh, 1986).

A study of online shopping in Hong Kong (Jiang, Yang & Jun, 2013) notes there is a result that overall online shopping convenience had a positively significant behavioral intention. Also Porral and Mangin (2014) found that the store image has a positive impact on purchase intention, as convenience is one factor in store image in retail industry of England. According to the study of store chain in Greece, Zairis and Evangelos (2014) find that the consumer chooses their stores by the short distance from their house. Moreover, the study of mobile industry in United Arab Emirates found that purchase intention is influences by convenience of mobile phone (Alam, 2015). For online shopping industry in Indonesia, Putro and Haryanto (2015) apply ease of use instead of convenience; they indicate that there is a positive relationship between purchase intention and ease of use while consumer attitude as intervening variable.

- Perceived Quality

Perceived quality is an evaluation of consumer, and a part of brand value which lead consumer in choosing one brand over competitor's brand (Zeithaml, 1988). The perceived quality is defined as the difference among overall quality and hidden quality (Aaker, 1991). Perceived quality can measure the potentiality to service the product, or the quickness of response, politeness, and ability of repair (Vantamay, 2007). The perceived quality is the result from consumers' experience when interact with the service

provider, explaining the prior awareness of quality and real performance (Brito & Aguilar, 2007). There are many powerful impacts of perceived quality on business values. Based on the study of Profit Impact of Market Strategy (PIMS), perceived quality has the positive impact in return on sales, power of brand, and acquire market share (Stobart, 1994).

Levy and Guterman (2012) indicate that perceived quality positively correlates purchase intention in their study of retail industry in Israel. Based on the study of Indian banking industry, Choudhury (2013) also support that perceived service quality can affect customers' purchase intentions. According to a study of Spanish retail industry, Porral and Mangin (2014) show that perceived quality has strong positive influence on purchase intention and store brand value.

- Word of Mouth

Arndt (1967) is defined word of mouth (WOM) as an oral communication between speaker and receiver toward brand, product or service without commercial purpose. Consumers trust and rely on a person who is independent from service provider than an employee from service provider itself because the message is unbiased. Word of mouth can be built by sharing of idea and experience with each other which significantly affects consumer's decision making process (Mangold, Miller & Brockway, 1999). Service is intangible and consumer has no chance to try before buying. Therefore, WOM is very important in service industry, mainly for professional and financial services which focus on high level of accuracy (Zeithaml, 1988). If consumers continually receive the positive word-of-mouth, consumers will have a strong preference in the service provider (Sweeney, Soutar & Mazzarol, 2007). On the other hand, if consumers hesitate in the performance of

service provider, consumers may not choose or stay with current service provider instead (Brown, Barry, Dacin & Gunst, 2005). Therefore, word-of-mouth has an important factor in effecting consumers' purchase intention.

Wang (2011) finds that word-of-mouth influences service quality perception and purchase intention in the Chinese service industry. Moreover, Jalilvand and Samiei (2012), who study the automobile industry market in Iran, discover that the most effective element for purchase intention and brand image is word-of-mouth. However, there are some previous studies that result in the opposite ways. Nguyen and Gizaw (2014) show that word of mouth had little or no effect on purchase behavior in their study of food industry in Sweden. Also, based on the study of real estate industry in Saudi Arabia, Ghazzawi and Bakar (2015) stated that reference groups (word of mouth) had no effect on the association with customers' purchase intention. Though there are mixed relationship found between word of mouth and purchase intention, in this current research, word of mouth was included since numerous studies have identified its statistical relationship with purchase intention.

Conceptual Framework and Research Hypotheses

Based on theories and related literature review, the conceptual framework is developed as seen in Figure 3. The dependent variable is purchase intention while four independent variables are brand awareness, convenience, perceived quality and word-of-mouth.

- Hypotheses

H1o: There is no impact of brand awareness on purchase intention

H2o: There is no impact of convenience on purchase intention

H3o: There is no impact of perceived quality on purchase intention

H4o: There is no impact of word of mouth on purchase intention

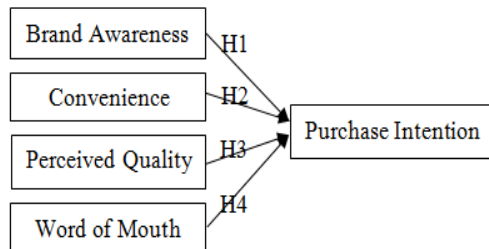


Figure3: Conceptual Framework developed by the researcher

Source: Created by the author for this study

Research Methodology

Quantitative research methodology was used and the survey questionnaire was utilized to answer research questions. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses (multiple linear regression) were applied in this research. Cronbach's alpha was also used to test the reliability of independent and dependent variables.

The target population was the customers who come to P automobile repair center at their first time. The number of customers who received the service at P automobile repair center in 2015 was approximately 600 and 180 were collected.

This research applied convenience method, a non-probability sampling procedure. The questionnaires were distributed by offline and online channel (LINE application, Facebook, and email). 65 questionnaires were distributed by offline channel while 115 questionnaires were distributed by online channel.

-Preliminary Testing

The preliminary testing with 30 respondents was applied to evaluate the reliability of questions. According to the results from Table 1, the Cronbach's Alpha of each variable was greater than 0.7. Therefore, all questions were reliable to apply as research instrument for this study.

Table 1: Table of Reliability Test (N=30)

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Purchase Intention	4	0.810
Brand Awareness	5	0.813
Convenience	5	0.933
Perceived Quality	5	0.936
Word of mouth	5	0.791

Results and Discussion

Table 2 shows demographic information of respondents. As for gender, the majority of respondents is male with 99 (55%). Respondents' age level is of age 31 to 40 with 77 (42.8%). The respondent's marital status is 52.2 (94%) for married. Moreover, the majority of respondents' education level is 114 (63.3%) of Bachelor's degree. Also, the highest percentage of respondents' income level was 55 (30.6%) of monthly income of THB15,001 to 30,000. The types of car, Sedan (Not more than 7 Passengers) resulted with the highest percentage, being of 142 (78.9%). Respondents' occupation is 77 (42.8%) of employee.

Table 2: Summary of Respondents' Characteristics (N=180)

Variable	Category	f	%
Gender	Male	99	55
	Female	81	45
Age	< 20 years old	1	0.6
	21-30 years old	37	20.6
	31-40 years old	77	42.8
	41-50 years old	39	21.7
	> 50 years old	26	14.3
Marital Status	Single	84	46.7
	Married	94	52.2
	Others	2	1.1
Education level	Below Bachelor's Degree	21	11.7
	Bachelor's Degree	114	63.3

Variable	Category	f	%
Income per month	Master's Degree or above	45	25
	< 15,000 ₪	11	6.1
	15,001 – 30,000 ₪	55	30.6
	30,001 – 45,000 ₪	45	25
	45,001 – 60,000 ₪	29	16.1
	60,001 – 75,000 ₪	12	6.7
	> 75,001 ₪	28	15.5
Type of car	Sedan (<7 Passengers)	142	78.9
	SUV	14	7.8
	Van	1	0.6
	Pick Up	23	12.7
	Others	0	0
Occupation	Student	3	1.7
	Self Employed	62	34.4
	Government officer	20	11.1
	Employee	77	42.8
	Unemployed	4	2.2
	Retired	9	5
	Others	5	2.8

Multiple linear regression analysis was operated to analyze the hypotheses as seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis (N=180)

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	Sig.	VIF
Brand Awareness	.327	.073	.304	.000	2.094
Convenience	.107	.083	.082	.199	1.777
Perceived Quality	.436	.090	.388	.000	2.849
Word of Mouth	.126	.066	.126	.057	1.910

Note. $R^2 = .603$, Adjusted $R^2 = .594$, $p < .05$

Dependent variable is Purchase intention

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1

H1o: There is no impact of brand awareness on purchase intention

According to the result, brand awareness had statistically significant effect

on purchase intention with .000 significant value ($p < .01$). Therefore, the null hypothesis 1 was rejected. There is an impact of brand awareness on purchase intention. The standardized coefficient (β) was +.304 indicating that if brand awareness increases by one unit, then the purchase intention will increase by 30.4%.

Hypothesis 2

H2o: There is no impact of convenience on purchase intention

The result from Table 3 showed the significant value of .199, which is greater than .05 (.199 > .05). It means that null hypothesis was failed to reject. Then, there is no impact of convenience on purchase intention.

Hypothesis 3

H3o: There is no impact of perceived quality on purchase intention

According to the result, perceived quality had statistically significant effect on purchase intention with .000 significant value ($p < .01$). Therefore, the null hypothesis 3 was rejected. There is an impact of perceived quality on purchase intention. The standardized coefficient (β) was +.388 indicating that if brand awareness increases by one unit, then the purchase intention will increase by 38.8%. Also, perceived quality had the strongest impact on purchase intention among two variables.

Hypothesis 4

H4o: There is no impact of word of mouth on purchase intention

The result from Table 3 showed the significant value of .057, which is greater than .05 (.057 > .05). It means that null hypothesis was failed to reject. Then, there is no impact of word of mouth on purchase intention.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to find the factors that influence customers'

purchase intention toward P automobile repair center. The result was accomplished the purpose of research by testing the statistical influence of independent variables (brand awareness, convenience, perceived quality and word of mouth) on dependent variable (purchase intention). As aforementioned, there were two independent variables (brand awareness and perceived quality) which impact on dependent variable (purchase intention).

-Recommendations

According to the TRA, consumer would perform the purchase intention when they had the positive perception on the outcome. In this current research, brand awareness and perceived quality could build consumers' positive probability. Thus, the company could develop a strategy to maintain more customers and generating more revenues based on the findings of this research.

In order to increase brand awareness, the company could promote its brand more actively. There has been increasing number of the internet user which makes social media more important marketing point to improve brand awareness. Therefore, the company could do more advertising on Facebook, website, etc. Also, the company could corporate with the insurance company to acknowledge their customer about the company's brand. There are several levels of automobile repair center separated by insurance company in Thailand. The higher level, the better support that automobile service center can receive. To achieve the higher level, each insurance company would have their required criteria and standard (such as the cleanness of working area, the quality control); the automobile repair center should try to accept and follow these conditions.

Moreover, in order to enhance customer perceived quality, the company could provide the training or seminar for their

employee for developing or improving their skills. Also, the company needs to improve the general condition of equipment and site of the auto repair center in order to enhance customer perceived quality which lead to improved purchase intention.

-Further Research

There were only four main predictors of purchase intention. However there might be other factors that may account for explaining purchase intention toward 'P' automobile car repair center. Thus, further research should be studied in other determinants of purchase intention.

Furthermore, a question on the types of car can be added in the future study. Questions for distinguishing Asian car brand from European car brand, and for different car sizes can be grouped by engine competition. The different types of car owners would have different attitude toward their purchase intention toward the auto repair center.

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